

Getting Unstuck—A Different Take

By Leonard Lang, Ph.D

Many of you know that a core part of my lifework mission is to help individuals and groups get unstuck. So here's a somewhat different take on getting and staying unstuck.

I once read about a man who challenged himself to drive home from work by a different route every day. After a while, as you may imagine, it became quite tricky and involved all kinds of indirect routes with side streets. This practice certainly seems odd as most of us returning home from work would want the fastest route, not the most convoluted. Once we found that, we would be unlikely to change it, especially after a hard day at work. But this person's sense of creativity and desire to keep himself interested and amused led him on some different paths and fun adventures.

Similarly, when I was in college, taking a course in the history of photography, the teacher gave us many assignments to help open up our ways of seeing and thinking. One time, he had us go out on our own on a city bus trip to "nowhere," challenging us to just go with no destination in mind. I wound up at the end of an unfamiliar route where I walked around and spoke with an older man tending a front yard garden who gave me some fresh tomatoes.

Even in the classroom this photographer and teacher had some unusual requests. For instance, he asked us to sit in different seats each time instead of finding a favorite spot and sticking to it as most people do. I learned how uncomfortable we can be with even small changes to our habits and routines and with not knowing what's going to happen, but also how these can create opportunities for noticing old, stale patterns in ourselves and for seeing and doing things differently.

I think one lesson in both stories is the value of making a physical change to initiate a mental change. Just as we can think a new way to act differently, we can also **go the other direction and simply act differently**—in any area of our lives--to get our minds unstuck and thinking differently in all areas of our lives.

So whether you take a different path to work or find yourself on a ride to nowhere—if you do so alertly, you may find yourself thinking new thoughts or just feeling fresher. You may find yourself unstuck and able to solve problems you were working on that had nothing to do with driving to work, walking a route, or sitting in a different seat. You may not get a fresh tomato, but you may wind up with the fresh, juicy idea you really need.

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